

Duxbury Clipper

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Students Get Their Kicks from Martial Arts

By MORAG MACLACHLAN

Except for the occasional command in Korean, the room was silent. Nervous parents and relatives were riveted on the three young men in front of them. The three boys were focused on their instructor, executing his every order. The sleeves of their uniforms snapped through the air in unison.

This was a milestone for both teacher and student. On Sunday afternoon, 11-year-old Carson Lloyd of Washington Street tested for



Lloyd flies through the air, over another student and breaks the board by executing a wheel kick.

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Students Get Their Kicks

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his black belt in Taekwondo. It was his instructor Kiho Seo's first children's test since opening KLS Taekwondo in Pembroke with his wife, Lori, in March 2003. Kiho Seo of Tremont St. said Taekwondo is the national martial art of his native South Korea. After studying Taekwondo since he was a child, Seo majored in this form of martial arts in South Korea and taught Taekwondo to soldiers during his mandatory three years in the South Korean army.

Lloyd's mother, Marylynn Carson, said her son began studying Taekwondo three years ago as a third grader.

"Carson was born in Korea and I was interested in him having the influence of a Korean person," Carson said.

Lloyd is now a sixth grader at Duxbury Middle School. He balanced attending Taekwondo practice three times a week with school and violin lessons. Lloyd is a red belt. Passing Sunday's tests of forms, sparring and Korean vocabulary elevates him to the level of black belt.



During a test on combination techniques, Seo asked Lloyd to jump over an obstacle and then complete a front kick.

The test lasted an hour and a half. It began promptly at noon with the playing of the Korean and American national anthems. Lloyd, along with classmates and fellow red belts 13-year-old Matthew Hillstrom and 11-year-old Matthew Nguyen, both of Pembroke, performed basic drills at Seo's calling. The crowd watched as the boys flew through the air throwing punches and intricate kicks like the spinning crescent kick.

With the basic skills completed, the boys stepped forward one by one to practice combination kicks with Seo. Their instructor called each combination and then held up mitts for the boys to kick or punch. Twenty-six different forms must be executed.

With all eyes on him, Lloyd flew through the air again and again completing a 360 degree roundhouse kick. He jumped up into a split with each foot hitting a corresponding mitt in each of Seo's hands to execute a jumping front kick with both legs.

The test continued with a written test, requiring the boys to translate English words into Korean. This was followed by the students performing eight forms in unison, completing an oral Korean test and sparring



Lloyd completes a jumping front kick with both legs.

each other. Seo complimented Lloyd on his sparring technique, commenting on Lloyd's quickness.

The final phase of the test was also the portion that Lloyd said made him the most nervous. Each boy had to break wooden boards with a punch or a kick. The first kick required the boys to jump through the air over one of the second degree black belt students and land a kick on a wooden board in Seo's hands. As difficult as the move seemed, each boy successfully shattered each wooden board placed in their path.

With that final task behind them, it was announced that each boy had earned his black belt. "You did a phenomenal job," Seo said. "You have worked hard over the years.

Through swollen toes and fingers, you have cheered each other on. All those times make this moment special."

Seo praised each boy individually, highlighting the work they had done over the last several years. "Carson, you have a natural ability. You have flexibility, speed, balance and power...everything fit for Taekwondo," Seo said. "You are always respectful and polite.

Today, your kicking and punching combinations were fantastic."

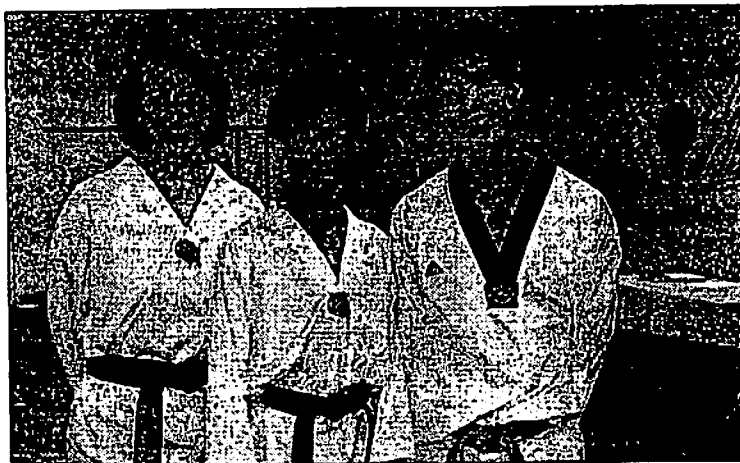
Carson Lloyd's mother said the obstacles her son and his classmates had to surpass to complete their test impressed her.

"Their stamina is amazing. They make it look easy. This shows their discipline and self-control," Carson said. "They have such respect for themselves and their teacher. You can hear a pin drop during their classes. Mr. Seo teaches with sensitivity and focuses on each student's specific needs."

Seo and his wife said martial arts not only promotes physical fitness, it also instills confidence in each student. "If you can break a board, you can do anything," Kiho Seo said.

"Parents often tell us Taekwondo helps to improve their child's grades, attention and behavior," said Lori Seo, who graduated from Duxbury High School in 1992.

Now that Lloyd and his two classmates have earned their black belt, the next step is becoming a second degree black belt. Seo said this takes about two years. He also invited the young men to become a part of the school's Taekwondo demonstration team, bringing martial arts and the Korean culture into schools and churches.



Carson Lloyd, 11, of Washington Street, stands with Lori and Kiho Seo, owners of KLS Taekwondo, after Lloyd successfully completed his black belt test.